

planning, construction, and eventual operation of Nord Stream 2, needs to be granted formal permission as a gas transmitter. There are many regulatory hurdles in their way—hurdles that have not yet been cleared. The process at a minimum should take many months, and the process could be derailed at any time.

First, there has to be an inspection process. Each of Nord Stream 2's strings has to be inspected to make sure there are no leaks, and part of that requires confirming that the pipelines were installed correctly. Part of that has already begun with air. Nobody knows how it has been going.

Then, there has to be an additional technical certification. This will be extremely difficult for Nord Stream 2 AG because the bipartisan sanctions legislation that I wrote and passed with Senator SHAHEEN and that Congress passed imposes mandatory sanctions on anyone who certifies the pipeline for operation.

Now, pause and think about that for a second. The pipeline can't go into effect unless it is certified. U.S. law passed overwhelmingly by Democrats and Republicans in this Congress, signed into law in the U.S. Code, says anyone who certifies it faces mandatory, crushing sanctions from the United States. The company that was originally going to certify it withdrew after the sanctions became law. The only way that a different company would dare to certify is if they believed the Biden administration would look the other way, would bless their certification in outright defiance of U.S. law.

Then, apart from the technical issues, Nord Stream 2 AG still has to be certified as a gas transmission operator as a matter of regulation and law. That should take at a minimum many months and require delicate negotiations between the company and the regulators.

You know, what is striking is, everything that I am saying has been said by the Biden administration. So right now, their talking points are "There is nothing we can do. It is a done deal. We have surrendered. We have given up. There is nothing we can do," but when they were in the process of surrendering, they said everything I just told you.

Until recently, even the top officials of the Biden administration acknowledged that physical completion of Nord Stream 2 didn't make its activation a fait accompli.

On June 8, Secretary of State Blinken testified that "even when the pipeline is physically complete, for it to go into operation, it still requires insurance, it still requires various permits, and we are looking very carefully at all of that." Secretary Blinken said that "it was too late to stop the joining of those pipes. Its operation is another matter."

Secretary Blinken was wrong when he said it was too late to stop the join-

ing of the pipes because we stopped them for over a year, until Biden surrendered to Putin, but he wasn't wrong when he said we could still stop the operation of it.

Given these requirements and this time line, the path for America is obvious: We should sanction Nord Stream 2 AG, the parent company of the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. That will automatically isolate the company, and it will signal our readiness to follow the law, to impose more sanctions, and to ensure that everyone knows that involvement with Putin's pipeline brings with it crippling, company-ending sanctions. Indeed, that is exactly why Congress has repeatedly passed legislation—bipartisan legislation—to stop this pipeline. But instead of obeying the law, President Biden decided brazenly and willfully to defy Federal law—to defy Congress's mandate.

In May, President Biden transmitted a communication to Congress that acknowledged, yes, he was obliged to impose sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG for violating the sanctions that Congress had passed and passed overwhelmingly, but instead of imposing those mandatory sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG, given the clear and unequivocal intent of Congress, the Biden administration chose instead to waive them. It was a disastrous decision. It was a decision based on weakness and capitulation to Russia. It hurt our friends and allies in Europe, and it hurt the United States of America.

It is a decision that can be reversed. Right now, the pipeline, if this pipeline goes into effect, will be the Biden-Putin pipeline. It doesn't have to be. This was designed at the outset to be the Putin pipeline, and when it was the Putin pipeline, we stopped it. Republicans stopped it. Democrats stopped it. We came together at a time of partisan division and we said together: Giving billions of dollars to Putin, to Russia, for aggressive military hostility, subjecting Europe to energy blackmail, making Europe dependent on Putin's gas, and destroying American jobs is bad all around.

Congress succeeded. It was the Putin pipeline until January 24, 2021. Joe Biden had just been sworn into office, and Putin, after a year of dormancy, began building the pipeline again because Biden had already signaled he intended to capitulate.

When we convene next week, I am going to discuss in greater detail the compromise that I have offered to the Biden administration and Senate Democrats to move forward on more of their nominees if they accept a compromise solution on Nord Stream 2. The Biden administration has had this compromise offer for 2 months, and they have done nothing with it.

But I would suggest something right now. In the course of my remarks, I have read quote after quote after quote from Senate Democrats. Senate Democrats know this pipeline is a disaster for America. Senate Democrats know

that surrendering to Putin is bad for America. But Senate Democrats are scared to stand up to a Democratic President.

I can tell you, when we had a Republican President, President Trump, there were some in the Trump administration who resisted these bipartisan sanctions, and as a Republican, I was perfectly willing to stand up to a Republican administration for those who were resisting these sanctions and to press them hard.

So my request to my Democratic colleagues is, show that you actually believe what you said in 2019 and 2020 and 2021. Show that you care about U.S. national security. Let's stand together, and let's reclaim that bipartisan consensus we have had for 2 years that Nord Stream 2 is bad for America and bad for our allies.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked, the clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Karen Erika Donfried, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European Affairs and Eurasian Affairs).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

NOMINATION OF MONICA P. MEDINA

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I would like to speak in support of Ms. Monica Medina's nomination to be Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

I have known Monica for more than 30 years and can say without a shred of doubt that she is the most qualified and competent candidate to fill this position. She has worked for decades across multiple administrations on issues of environmental law and policy. She understands well the interconnected world we live in and knows that 21st-century U.S. foreign policy goes not simply beyond the water's edge but to the seas and the skies and the sands of the world, where universal threats and their solutions lie.

Monica is a proven public servant through and through. Over the years, she has fought for what matters most. For example, during her time at the Defense Department, she worked to end discriminatory practices against women in the military, to provide them with opportunities that were previously closed to them simply because of their gender.

After her time at DOD, she continued the track record of fighting for what is most important by calling out the connection between illegal wildlife trafficking and organized criminal networks, confronting illegal fishing that is too often tied to global piracy and human rights violations.

Her expertise in globe-spanning threats to our national security is exactly why former Secretary of Defense

Leon Panetta and the Center for Strategic and International Studies have turned to her as an expert and adviser, because she knows that we can't protect ourselves at home without a robust strategy abroad.

Throughout her career, she has proven to be a pragmatic and solutions-focused public servant by working across the aisle and with stakeholders from different States and industries in the United States to find ways to protect our oceans and our ocean economy.

After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Monica collaborated with five Republican Governors of affected States to get \$1 billion in restoration funds from oil company BP so that States could quickly stop rebounding from the disaster.

Her work at NOAA was praised by groups like the Seafood Harvesters of America, who support her experience and legacy of protecting our oceans and the workers and communities that depend upon them.

Louis Pasteur once said:

Science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity, and is the torch which illuminates the world. Science is the highest personification of the nation because that nation will remain the first which carries the furthest the works of thought and intelligence.

Monica Medina has dedicated her career to promoting America's excellence in these two realms—the tools of science and the values of humanity—because it is there where America's promise to the world can be found.

I want to reiterate very strongly that she has served every mission, she has fulfilled every goal that she has been given, and every discussion that she has ever had has always resulted in people holding us in the highest regard by the key stakeholders in every issue she has touched. I want to reiterate my strong support for her nomination and hope my colleagues will join me in confirming her for this important position.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, notwithstanding rule XXII, that upon the use or yielding back of time on the Donfried nomination, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on the Medina, Phee, Robinson, and Lewis nominations; that if closure is invoked on any of the nominations listed, all postcloture time be considered expired and the vote on confirmation of those nominations occur at a time and in an order to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Republican leader, with 1 hour for debate equally divided prior to each vote, and the Republican debate be controlled by Senator CRUZ.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURPHY. For the information of the Senate, we expect four rollcall

votes beginning at around 8 p.m. Those votes will be cloture on the Medina, Phee, Robinson, and Lewis nominations.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am glad that we are coming to some conclusion this evening with respect to a handful of the long list of pending nominations for the State Department and the Department of Defense, but it is a small portion of a list that is growing bigger and bigger.

Never before has a first-term President had this few national security nominees in place by the fall of his first year. And this is a growing national security crisis imposed on the country by Republicans who have decided to put their hatred of Democrats and this President ahead of the security of this country—above the security of this Nation.

And it just takes a lot of hutzpah for my colleagues to stand here on the floor and criticize the President's conduct of foreign policy at the same time that they are refusing to allow the President to have staff to conduct foreign policy. Let me say that again. We have all sorts of Republicans coming down here and savaging the President's policy on Afghanistan or on China or on Russia, but then, at the exact same time, taking extraordinary steps to prevent the President from having anybody actually implement policies toward Afghanistan or Russia or China. It is akin to standing up in a restaurant and complaining about how slow the service is right after you went and barricaded the doors in and out of the kitchen.

My colleagues can't have it both ways. If you want to complain about the President's policies toward China, then stop standing in the way of allowing him to have personnel that can execute on sound policy. Stop standing in the way of the Assistant Secretary who will oversee policy in the region.

You have complaints about Afghanistan. Then why are we continuing to block those who would be in charge of refugee policy and in charge of resettlement policy to get more Afghans out of the country?

You have complaints about Russia. Well, for a month Republicans have been blocking the key personnel who oversee policy toward Russia, whether it be the Assistant Secretary for Europe or our Ambassador to NATO.

Here is what voters are left to wonder: Are these sincere objections based upon policy or is this really about an intentional effort to try to undermine the security of this country in order to damage Joe Biden?

I don't know the answer to that question, but I can't figure out any plausible reason how this benefits the country. Never before—never before—has a minority gone to these lengths to try to undermine a President's national security team.

Every single Democrat had massive objections, moral and practical, to

President Trump's foreign policy, but not a single one of us contemplated doing what our Republican colleagues are doing right now—holding up every single one of Donald Trump's Ambassadors and nominees—because we knew that that would undermine the security of the country, because there are differences that we have, but there are far more points of agreement where midlevel civil servants and Ambassadors are carrying out policies on behalf of America that Republicans and Democrats agree on.

Here is the list of nominees that are stuck. What does the Chief of Protocol have to do with Nord Stream 2? What does the Ambassador to Vietnam have to do with the objections of the Senator from Texas over an oil pipeline? Why are we blocking the Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development?

Nothing that is happening here has anything to do with the security of this country.

So I am glad we are unlocking a handful of nominees, but we are going to be here on Thursdays and Fridays and Saturdays and Sundays. I am going to advocate that we stay as long as it takes in order to protect this country, in order to stop this unprecedented blockade of the people who do the work of standing up for the security of this Nation every single day.

One of the critiques that has been lodged here today is about the President's proposal and his execution of his proposal to wind down the 20-year war in Afghanistan. In fact, one of my colleagues said that until the Secretary of State resigns, he will continue to block all Department of Defense and State Department nominees, knowing that that is not going to happen.

So I do want to spend a few minutes this evening talking about the real story behind President Biden's decision to bring a 20-year war that has cost this country \$2 trillion, has cost this Nation thousands of lives, and has ended up in hundreds of thousands of Afghans being killed—let's just be very clear at the outset. President Biden's decision to bring U.S. troops home from Afghanistan is wildly popular—supported by three out of four Americans. And I want to talk about the danger of what has happened over the course of the last 2 months with this critique of the President's withdrawal plan. Some of it is legitimate, but some of it is really dangerous.

So, in 2009, President Obama planned to send a whole bunch of additional troops into Afghanistan. It was Obama's surge—the idea that we would plus-up our troops there. We would partner with diplomats and aid administrators. It was a means to try to conquer and then hold territory in Afghanistan that had been taken by the Taliban.

It was a really good plan. It had all kinds of counterinsurgency buzz words. The PowerPoint looked really sharp. And it was endorsed by a lot of smart